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ABSTRACT

While field placement in human services programs is an extremely important practical phase of training, it has generally not been standardized, and thus can be difficult to assess. A model program and assessment format developed by Hudson County Community College (HCCC), in Jersey City, New Jersey, however, provides a possible framework for standardizing field placement programs. Students in HCCC's program are expected to complete two consecutive courses of field placement, with each course requiring 128 hours of actual work at a placement site, weekly one-hour seminars, the maintenance of weekly logs of student activities, and final term papers. The field placement is designed to develop a sense of professional belonging and identity by requiring students to identify client service needs and gaps, prepare progress reports, assess case studies, and evaluate a strategic treatment plan. Grades are determined by students' weekly journals, term papers, and evaluations of their performance at the placement sites. To effectively evaluate placement site performance, an instrument was developed at HCCC focusing on descriptive, qualitative, and quantitative aspects of the field experience. The instrument was intended to evaluate students individually at mid-term and again at the end of the course to provide comparative data, and has been used with about 20 students annually for the past 5 years. The evaluation instrument is included. (MAB)

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ASSESSMENT OF FIELD PLACEMENT

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CONCISE DESCRIPTION

ASSESSMENT OF FIELD PLACEMENT

Nabil Marshood

Assessment and evaluation of human services field placement program are discussed. The evaluation model, including an assessment scale, as developed at Hudson County Community College is presented. This model provides the necessary tools for assessment of the students externs in their human services field placement program, and a structure to what has been unstructured course of study.

ASSESSMENT OF FIELD PLACEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Human services programs across the nation place special significance on the field placement as the molding phase in the training process. It is common knowledge among faculty, practitioners and students that through the field placement program, students learn to integrate theoretical principles with practical reality, they gain new relevant insight about their personalities, acquire professional skills, and evolve to become competent professionals. Above all, it is through this process of experiential learning that they could be trusted, as professionals, by their colleagues and by the various clientele groups.

Given its uniqueness, it has not been standardized. Different faculty members, and various agency supervisors resort to different sets of criteria and instruments for evaluating their students. While lack of standardization is a reflection of the nature of the human services profession, and to a certain extent, provides the flexibility needed to assess students performance in a variety of settings, it might hinder the same purpose it is trying to achieve.

Since their inception, human service programs have succeeded to establish various parameters and guidelines for the implementation of the field placement courses. However, despite the existence of acceptable philosophy, assessment of the field placement continues to suffer from lack of standardization.

The model presented here is an attempt to establish a

preliminary framework for such a process to begin. It is hoped that it will generate relevant discussion and debate toward the ultimate goal of generating a successful evaluation system.

Human Services students are expected to earn credit toward their degree by actively participating in the actual field of Human Services and performing various professional or paraprofessional duties at the placement site.

The nature of the profession, as well as the diversity of the placement sites and their requirements affect to a greater extent the educational outcomes of that experience.

Central to any assessment is clear definition of goals, objectives and parameters. This report presents a field placement model as developed and has been in effect at Hudson County Community College (HCCC) for the past five years.

Human Services students at HCCC are expected to complete two consecutive courses of Field Placement. The requirements for each course are as follows:

1. Under the supervision of a field supervisor, the student must complete a total of 128 hours per course of actual work at the placement site.
2. Attend one hour weekly seminar. Students from both courses participate in this seminar.
3. Maintain a weekly log of their activities at the agency with their retrospective analysis.
4. Submit a term paper.

Under the instructor's direction, students identify their area of interest as well as their placement site. They are expected to prepare a written self-presentation to be submitted to their instructor and to their field supervisors. In addition, they are required to sign a working contract with their field supervisor, to allow for both parties to state their interest of working together and for the supervisor to provide the student with educational opportunities and to avail him/herself to guide and advise the student on the wide range of possibilities as well as to the meaning of wise professional conduct and judgement.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Field Placement courses are designed to provide the student with experiential environment to help establish and develop a sense of professional belonging, professional self and professional identity. Some of the objectives are:

1. Observe and report on the client's behavior, the organization and on the role and conduct of the professional staff.
2. Discuss, define and defend their professional role in a human service setting.
3. Identify clients' needs and recommend appropriate service delivery system.
4. Identify service gaps and make relevant recommendations.
5. Identify agency and community resources and make them available and accessible to clients.
6. Observe, report, and recommend improvement in the interaction between the agency and its environment.

7. Conduct professional interviews with individuals, families and groups.
8. Prepare progress reports and professional documentation.
9. Identify and assess a case study.
10. Present, analyze and evaluate clients' personal behavior and their interaction with their environment.
11. Assess and evaluate a strategic treatment plan.
12. Identify, apply and evaluate professional skills, attitudes, knowledge and ethical behavior in a human services setting.

PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

Student's final grade is determined based upon completion the following assignments: 1. Weekly journals; 2. Term paper; and, 3. Performance at the placement site.

Evaluation of the first two items is feasible through the students reports and presentation at the seminar. The weekly journal is outlined to include the following: a) Events and activities at the placement site; b) Student's reactions (thoughts, feelings and actions); c) Action taken and resources utilized; and, d) Theoretical/conceptual applications.

Assessment of performance at the placement site requires that a special tool be devised. The following instrument provides for descriptive, qualitative & quantitative information about the student, and allows for interaction between the student, the field supervisor and the instructor. In the event students find their evaluation to be unacceptable, they are required to discuss it with their supervisor and instructor.

EVALUATION FORM

Instructor _____ Semester _____

___ Midterm Evaluation
Date _____ ___ Final Evaluation

Student _____

Field Supervisor _____
(Name, Title, Credentials)

Agency _____

Address _____

Phone _____

****

A. Describe the student assignments and activities

_____

_____

_____

_____

B. Specify the student activities at the agency

ACTIVITY		COMMENTS
1.	Work with individual cases	_____
2.	Work with groups	_____
3.	Work with families	_____
4.	Administrative tasks	_____
5.	Case supervision	_____
6.	Staff meeting	_____
7.	Seminars	_____
8.	Case Consultation	_____
9.	Clerical Tasks	_____
10.	Record Keeping	_____
11.	Research	_____
12.	Committee Work	_____
13.	Community Organization	_____
14.	Other, Specify	_____

C. Please give your overall assessment of the student. (Performance, professional growth, potential contribution to the field): _____

D. Rate the student extern using the following scale:

1= Poor 2= Fair 3= Good 4= V. Good 5. Excellent

1. Knowledge in the field ..... _____
2. Skills of intervention ..... _____
3. Relationship with clients ..... _____
4. Relationship with families ..... _____
5. Relationship with co-workers ..... _____
6. Relationship with immediate supervisor. _____
7. Relationship with administrators ..... _____
8. Attitude ..... _____
9. Responsibility ..... _____
10. Reliability ..... _____
11. Follow through on assigned tasks ..... _____
12. Initiative ..... _____
13. Attendance ..... _____
14. Originality ..... _____
15. Punctuality ..... _____
16. Understand the human services worker's role and its boundaries ..... _____
17. Understand policies, goals, and procedures ..... _____
18. Utilization of community resources .... _____
19. Utilization of agency resources ..... _____
20. Identify service gaps ..... _____
21. Potential for professional growth ..... _____
22. Networking and referral ..... _____
23. Ethical conduct ..... _____

E. Recommendation

1. Pass, outstanding
2. Pass, average
3. Fail

F. This report was discussed with the student: _____yes _____no

H. Student's statement: This evaluation was discussed with me on_____ and found it____ acceptable_____unacceptable

Student's Comments: _____

Student's Signature _____ Date_____

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date_____

ADMINISTRATION AND OUTCOME

This instrument should to be applied to individual students. It is not intended to serve for group assessment and not as a research tool. To allow for comparison, it should be administered twice during the semester, once at mid-term and the other at the final. It should be noted that this instrument is to complement, not substitute, the faculty communications with the agency supervisor, and visits to the placement sites.

This instrument, in its revised form, has been in operation at HCCC for the past five years, where twenty students, on the average, have been evaluated annually. Faculty, students and agency supervisors have found it to be valuable for it provides them with clear criteria of evaluation, thus eliminating, or reducing the effects of subjectivity in the student-supervisor relationship.

CONCLUSION

The Field Placement program as described provides as much structure in an unstructured reality. The program format and the evaluation form were found to be useful in other areas as well. With modification, faculty of the Child Care, Legal Assisting and Public Administration programs have used it extensively. The supervisors and the students have found it to be very practical and to provide clear picture of the program and the students' performance.